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CREATURES ON THE LOOSE™

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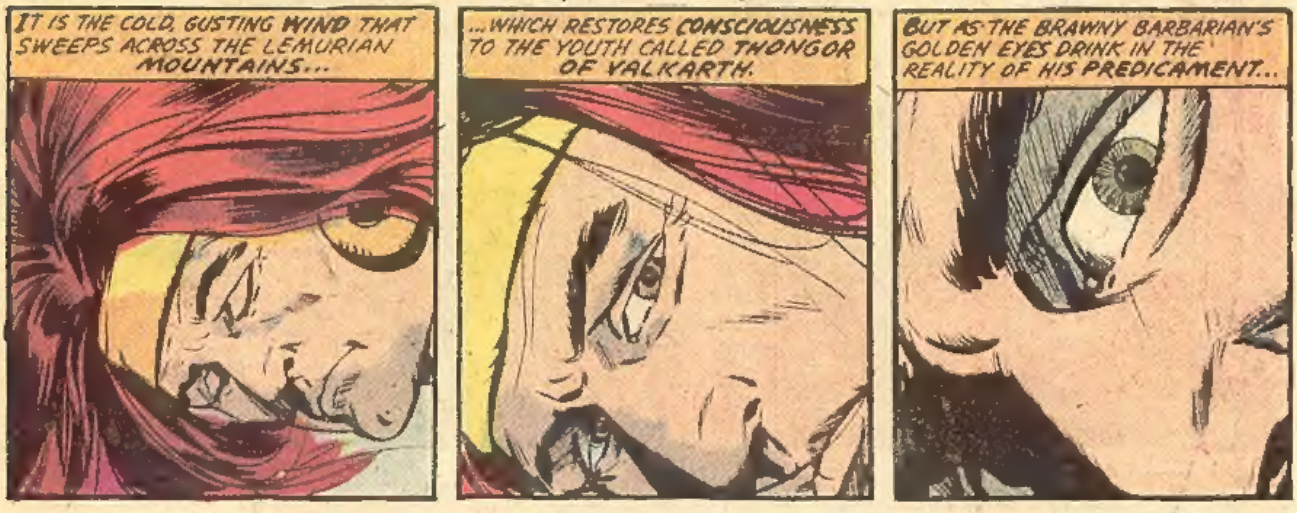
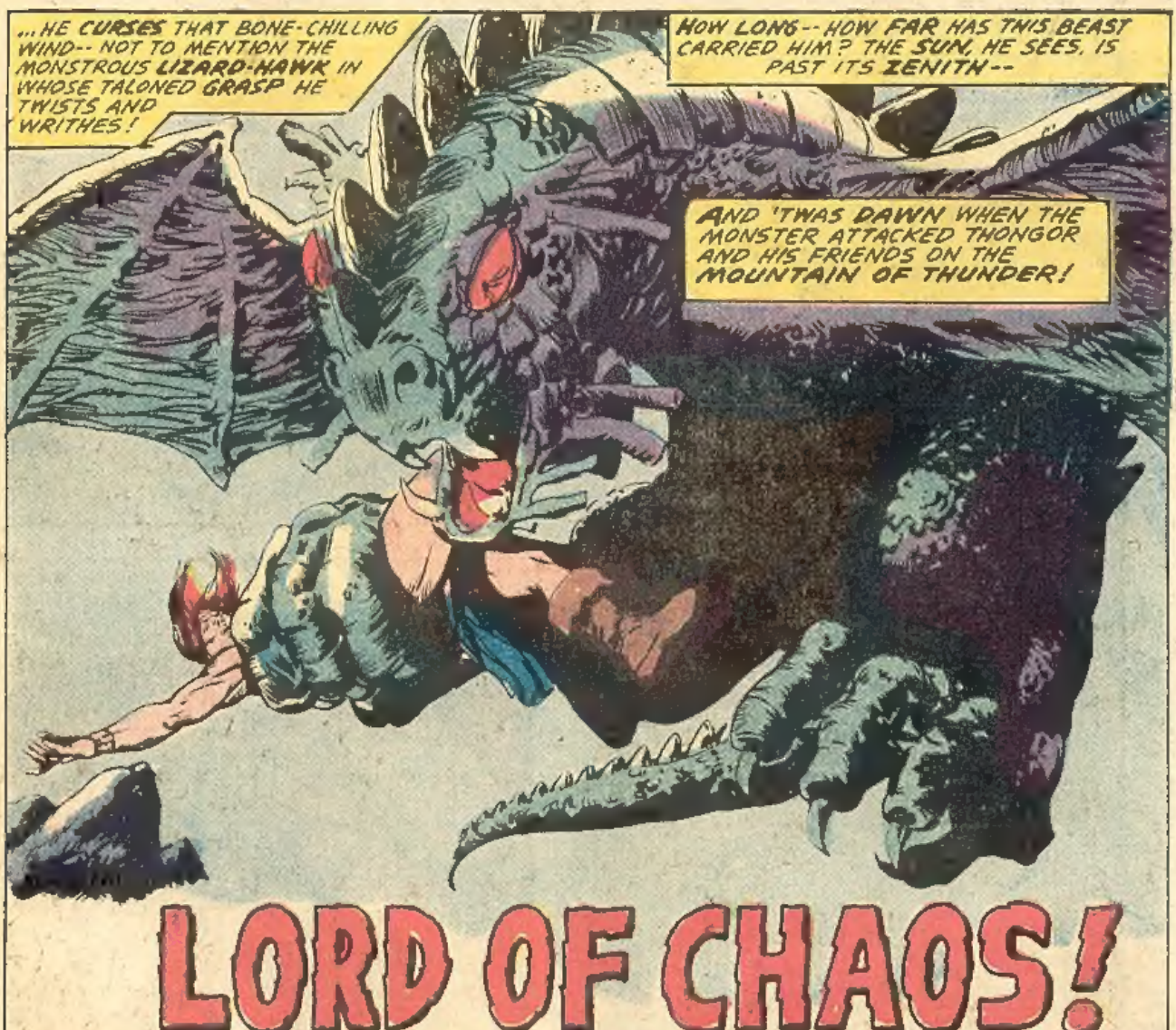
Stan Lee Presents: THONGOR, WARRIOR OF THE LOST LAND! ™

STEVE GERBER SCRIPT / VICENTE ALCAZAR ART / JEAN SIMEK LETTERER / ROY THOMAS EDITOR / ADAPTED FROM "THE WIZARD OF LEMURIA" BY LIN CARTER, CREATOR OF THONGOR.


IT IS THE COLD, GUSTING WIND THAT SWEEPS ACROSS THE LEMURIAN MOUNTAINS...
...WHICH RESTORES CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE YOUTH CALLED THONGOR OF VALKARTH.
BUT AS THE BRAWNY BARBARIAN'S GOLDEN EYES DRINK IN THE REALITY OF HIS PREDICAMENT...


...HE CURSES THAT BONE-CHILLING WIND-- NOT TO MENTION THE MONSTROUS LIZARD-HAWK IN WHOSE TALONED GRASP HE TWISTS AND WRITHES!
HOW LONG-- HOW FAR HAS THIS BEAST CARRIED HIM? THE SUN, HE SEES, IS PAST ITS ZENITH--
AND 'TWAS DAWN WHEN THE MONSTER ATTACKED THONGOR AND HIS FRIENDS ON THE MOUNTAIN OF THUNDER!

LORD OF CHAOS!

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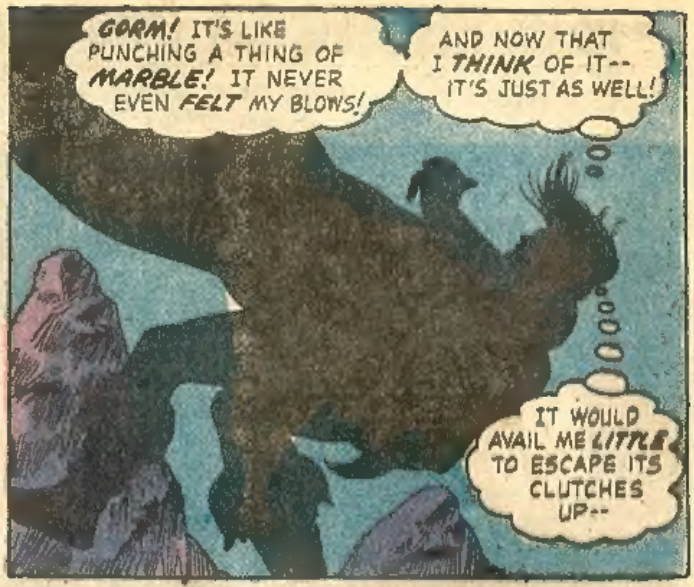
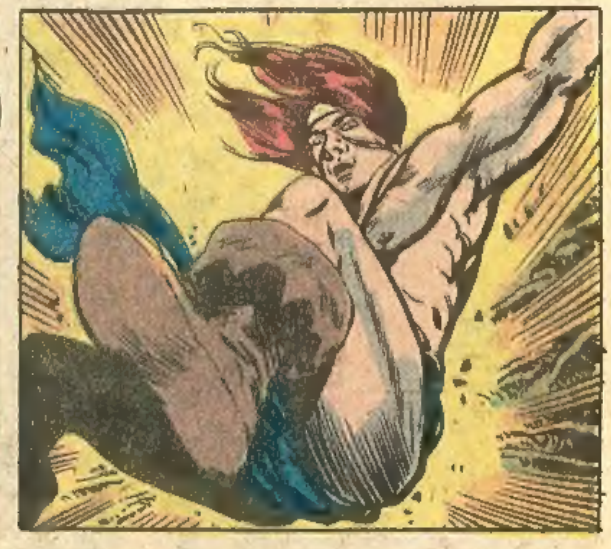
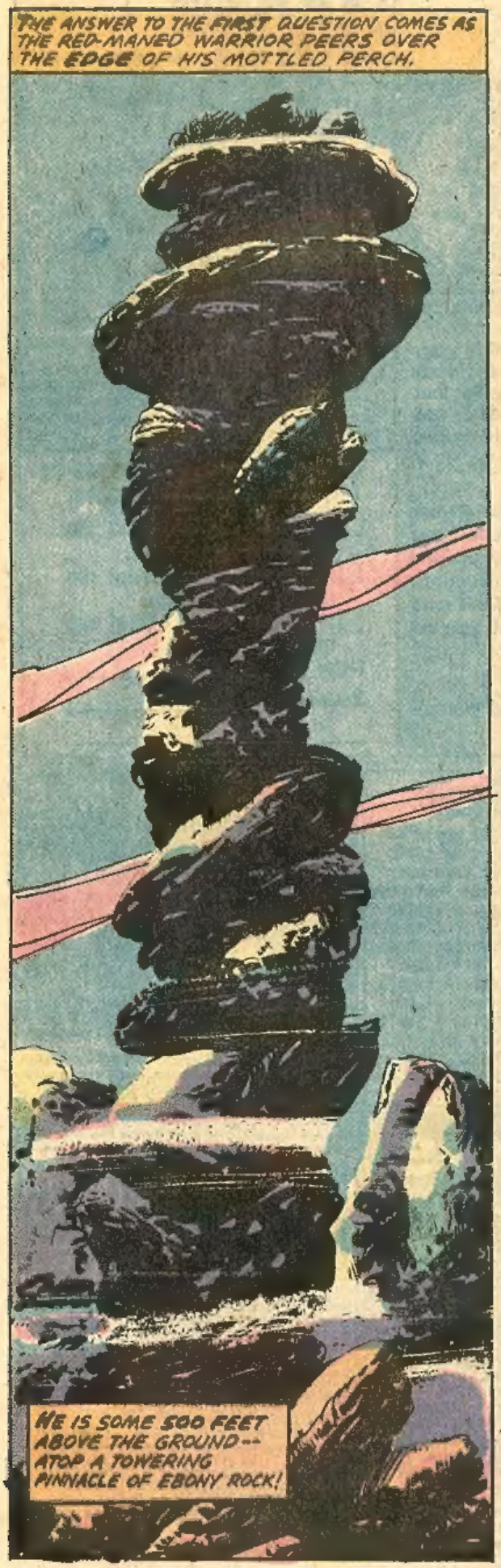

GORM! IT'S LIKE PUNCHING A THING OF MARBLE! IT NEVER EVEN FELT MY BLOWS!
AND NOW THAT I THINK OF IT-- IT'S JUST AS WELL!
IT WOULD AVAIL ME LITTLE TO ESCAPE ITS CLUTCHES UP--

FOR ONE BRIEF MOMENT, AS HE PLUNGES TOWARD THE CRAGGY LANDSCAPE BELOW, THONGER WONDERS IF ALL THE NINETEEN GODS HAVE TAKEN LOSS OF THEIR SENSES, AND THAT MOMENT IS ALL THAT'S ALLOWED HIM FOR WONDERING--! FOR IN THE NEXT MOMENT HE LANDS-- SHAKEN, SOMEWHAT DAZED, BUT UNHURT-- ON A BED OF LEAVES AND TWIGS AND MUD!




THE ANSWER TO THE FIRST QUESTION COMES AS THE RED-MANED WARRIOR PEERS OVER THE EDGE OF HIS MOTTLED PERCH.
HE IS SOME 500 FEET ABOVE THE GROUND -- ATOP A TOWERING PINNACLE OF EBONY ROCK!

AND THE REVELATION IS IN NO WAY A COMFORTING ONE!

HIS BROADSWORD IS GONE, LOST IN THE FIGHT WITH THE MOTHER GRAKK -- BUT EVEN BLADELESS -- EVEN WITH NOWHERE TO RUN -- THE YOUNG NORTHLANDER IS NOT WITHOUT RESOURCE.

THE REMAINS OF THE GRAKKLETS' EARLIER MEALS BECOME HIS WEAPON --
-- AND THE JAGGED BONE TEARS DEEP INTO THE LIZARD-CHICK'S THROAT, DRENCHING THONGOR WITH ITS FOUL-SMELLING BLOOD!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

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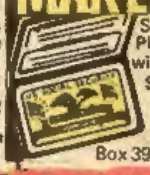

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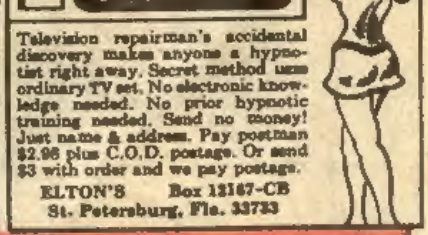

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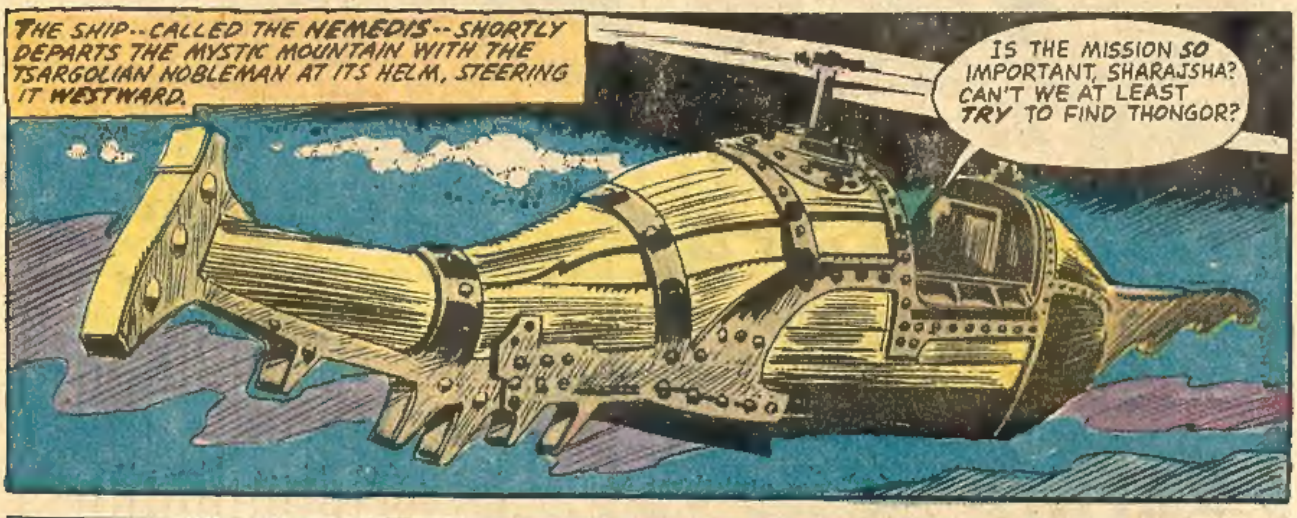
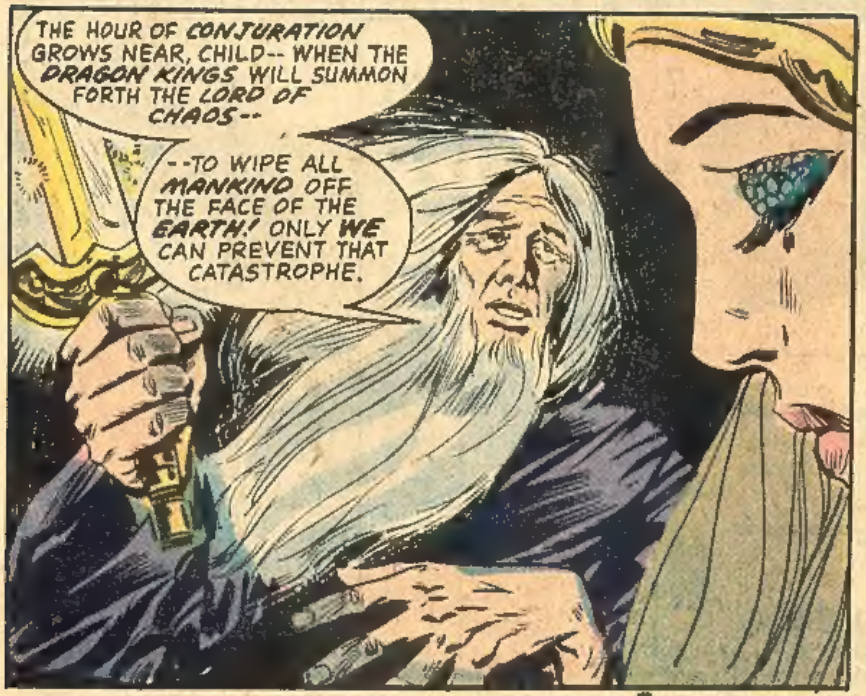
BUT SLASHING THE HIDE OF EVEN A BABY GRAKK IS DIFFICULT--
--AND IT HAS LEFT THONGOR WEAPONLESS AGAIN. CAUTIOUSLY, HE STOOPS TO RE-ARM HIMSELF.
AND HE DOES SO BARELY IN TIME TO AVOID THE SECOND CHICK'S GRISLY BEAK--
BUT NOT ITS RAZOR-SHARP CLAWS, WHICH RIP A SHALLOW BUT BLOODY WOUND ALONG HIS SPINE.
HIS MIGHTY FORM NOW AFIRE WITH PAIN, THONGOR MAKES WHAT HE KNOWS MUST BE HIS FINAL ATTEMPT AT SELF-PRESERVATION!
AN ARM DARTS FORWARD... A LEG LASHES BACK--!
ONE GRAKKLET TUMBLES TO ITS DOOM! AND THE OTHER IS PARALYZED BY AGONY FAR EXCEEDING THONGOR'S OWN!
YET, FOR ALL HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED, THE BARBARIAN KNOWS HE IS FAR FROM SAFE--!
THE MOTHER... COULD RETURN... ANY TIME...! HAVE TO GET... OUT OF HERE...!
AND THE... ONLY WAY... IS... DOWN!
FEW ARE THE MEN WHO WOULD DARE THIS DESCENT, EVEN WITH ALL THEIR FACULTIES UNIMPAIRED.
FEWER STILL ARE THOSE WHO, IF DARING, COULD ACCOMPLISH THE FEAT.
AND IN THONGOR'S DAY, VIRTUALLY ALL OF THOSE FEW WOULD BE MEN OF THE LEMURIAN NORTHLAND--

MEANWHILE, ON THE PEAK CALLED SNARIMBA.. THE MOUNTAIN OF THUNDER -- THE MAGE SHARAJSHA MAKES A SOMEWHAT LESS PERILOUS DESCENT --
NO, KARM KARVUS-- SUMIA! IT IS DONE! STARSWORD HAS BATHED IN THE MAGIC LIGHTNINGS ATOP--
THONGOR! WHERE IS THONGOR?

AND WHEN THE WIZARD HAS BEEN APPRISED OF THE VALKARTHAN'S TERRIBLE FATE.
SPIRITED AWAY BY A GRAKK--! MY HEART IS HEAVY WITH THIS NEWS.
AND YET-- WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO CARRY ON! READY THE SHIP, KARM KARVUS!


THE SHIP--CALLED THE NEMEDIS--SHORTLY DEPARTS THE MYSTIC MOUNTAIN WITH THE TSARGOLIAN NOBLEMAN AT ITS HELM, STEERING IT WESTWARD.
IS THE MISSION SO IMPORTANT, SHARAJSHA? CAN'T WE AT LEAST TRY TO FIND THONGOR?


THE HOUR OF CONJURATION GROWS NEAR, CHILD-- WHEN THE DRAGON KINGS WILL SUMMON FORTH THE LORD OF CHAOS--
--TO WIPE ALL MANKIND OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH! ONLY WE CAN PREVENT THAT CATASTROPHE.

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

"I'm sick and tired of my Job!"

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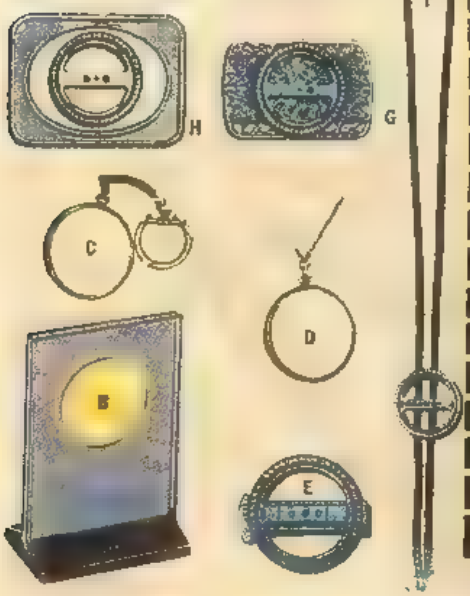

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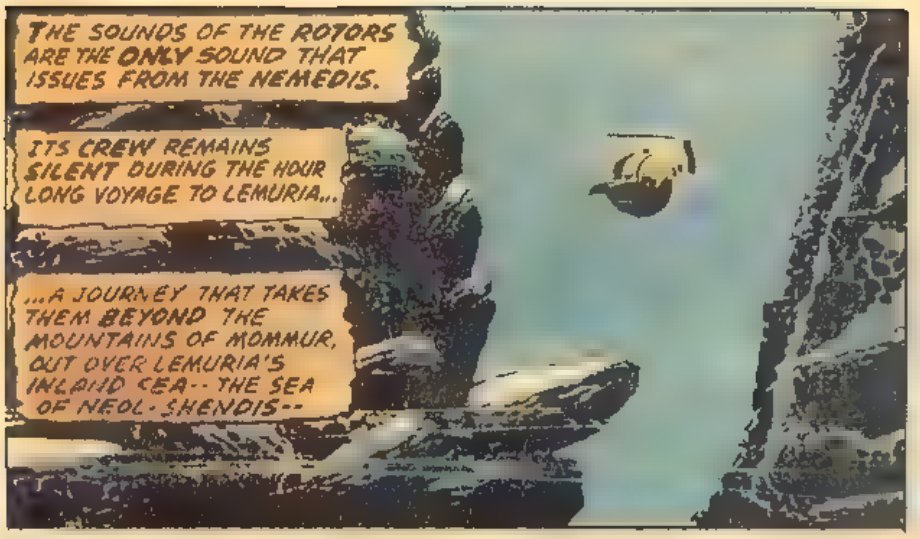
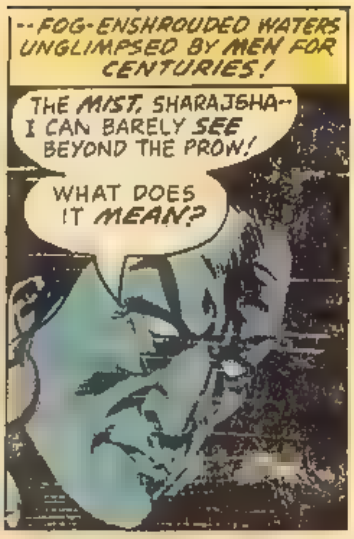
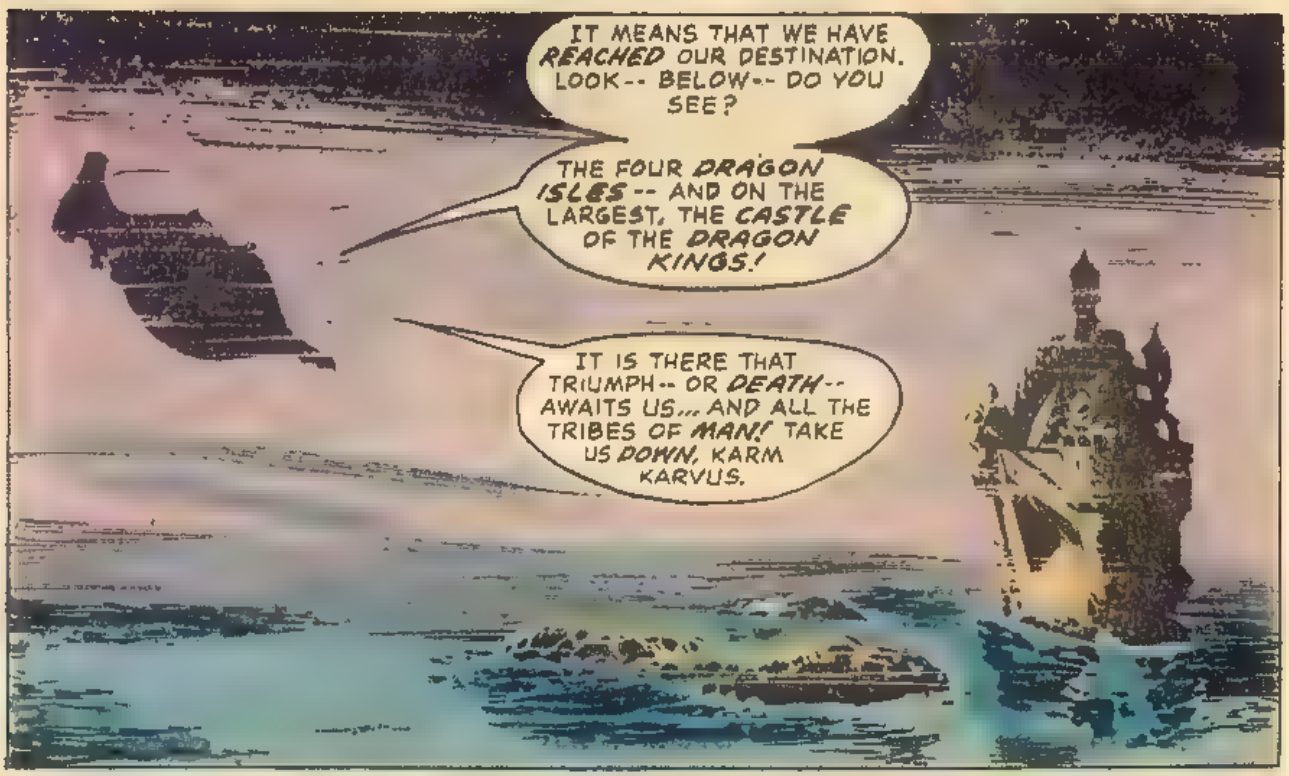
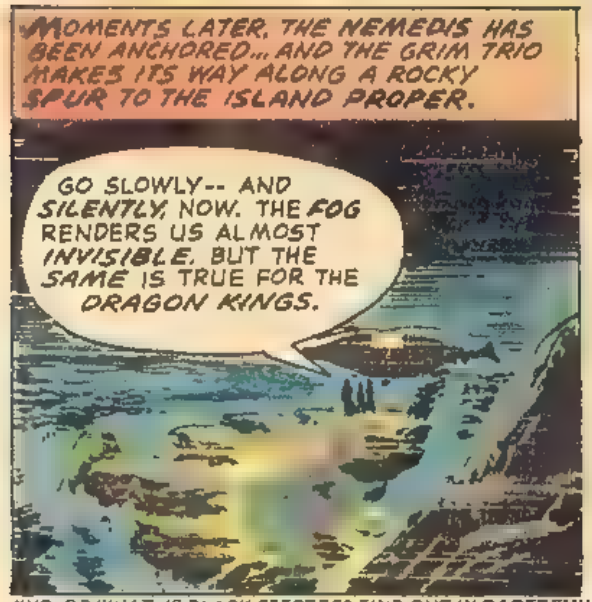

THE SOUNDS OF THE ROTORS ARE THE ONLY SOUND THAT ISSUES FROM THE NEMEDIS.
ITS CREW REMAINS SILENT DURING THE HOUR LONG VOYAGE TO LEMURIA...
...A JOURNEY THAT TAKES THEM BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS OF MOMMUR, OUT OVER LEMURIA'S INLAND SEA -- THE SEA OF NEOL-SHENDIS --


-- FOG-ENSHROUDED WATERS UNGLIMPSED BY MEN FOR CENTURIES!
THE MIST, SHARAJSHA -- I CAN BARELY SEE BEYOND THE PROW!
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?


IT MEANS THAT WE HAVE REACHED OUR DESTINATION. LOOK -- BELOW -- DO YOU SEE?
THE FOUR DRAGON ISLES -- AND ON THE LARGEST, THE CASTLE OF THE DRAGON KINGS!
IT IS THERE THAT TRIUMPH -- OR DEATH -- AWAITS US... AND ALL THE TRIBES OF MAN! TAKE US DOWN, KARM KARVUS.


MOMENTS LATER, THE NEMEDIS HAS BEEN ANCHORED... AND THE GRIM TRIO MAKES ITS WAY ALONG A ROCKY SPUR TO THE ISLAND PROPER.
GO SLOWLY -- AND SILENTLY, NOW. THE FOG RENDERS US ALMOST INVISIBLE. BUT THE SAME IS TRUE FOR THE DRAGON KINGS.

COME, MY FRIENDS -- HUG THE CASTLE WALL. WE'LL FOLLOW IT TILL WE FIND AN ENTRANCE.

TREMBLING WITH ANTICIPATION-- AND WITH FEAR--THE THREE ADVENTURERS INCH THEIR WAY ALONG THE SOMBER EBONY WALL. UNTIL--

HOLD! THIS PORTAL-- IT MUST LEAD TO THE COURTYARD!

I SHALL ENTER FIRST AND CALL FOR YOU WHEN I'M CERTAIN IT IS SAFE.

IS IT MERELY HIS IMAGINATION, THE ANCIENT MAGE WONDERS AS HE PASSES THROUGH THE DIRE GATEWAY--

--OR IS THERE SOME SEETHING, SINISTER LIFE CONCEALED BEHIND THIS VEIL OF CHILL MIST?

AN INSTANT LATER--HE KNOWS.

BUT GAINING THAT KNOWLEDGE COSTS HIM THE STARSWORD--

--AND PERHAPS... A GREAT DEAL MORE.

AAAGH!

SHARAJSHA--! WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? ANSWER ME!

HE- HE CAN'T, KARM KARVUS! LOOK-- AT YOUR FEET!

WHO DID THIS? SHOW YOURSELVES, EVIL ONES! OR ARE YOU SO COWARDLY--

YEEAAGH!

YOU DARE CALL THE MASTERS OF THE WORLD "COWARDLY"?!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

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MARVEL GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS WILL BE WINGING YOUR WONDROUS WAY
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(AND A COLOSSAL COMPANION-MAG IS ALREADY IN THE WORKS--TO START THE MARVEL AGE OF COMICS ALL OVER AGAIN!!)

HAVE YOU KILLED HIM? AND SHARAJAHA ALSO? AM I TO BE NEXT..?
NAY, SUMIA CHOND, PRINCESS OF PATANGA-- THEY LIVE-- AND SO SHALL YOU-- FOR NOW.
BUT AT THE HOUR OF THE EQUINOX-- ALL YOUR LIVES SHALL BE GIVEN UP UPON THE GREAT ALTAR-- TO FEED THE GROWING POWER OF THE LORD OF CHAOS!
YOU, PRINCESS-- AND YOUR COMRADES-- WILL PROVIDE THE LIFE-ENERGIES THEY REQUIRE TO CROSS THE INTERCOSMIC GULFS TO EARTH!
SO SPEAKS SSSAAA-- HIGH PRIEST OF THE DRAGON KINGS!

FROM THE START OF HIS CLIMB DOWN THE NEARLY SHEER SURFACE OF THE STONE PINNACLE -- AND THROUGHOUT THE THREE-HOUR DURATION OF THAT CLIMB-- THONGOR HAS DARED NOT LOOK BENEATH HIM

UNTIL NOW-!

GORM! A RIVER! THE STONE RISES OUT OF A RIVER!

STINKING WITH THE COMBINED ODORS OF THE GRAKKLETS' BLOOD AND HIS OWN PERSPIRATION, THIRSTING FROM THE NUMBING EXERTION OF HIS DEATH DEFYING DESCENT FROM THE NEST --

--THE BARBARIAN FLINGS HIS BODY INTO THE CURRENT WITH CHILDLIKE DELIGHT!

HE REVELS IN THE STREAM'S COOLING WETNESS, AS IT WASHES THE SUN-DRIED CRUOR FROM HIS SKIN AND BRINGS RELIEF TO HIS PARCHED THROAT... SIMPLY GOING WITH THE FLOW... UNTIL REFRESHED.

ONLY THEN DOES THE OTHER FORTUNATE ASPECT OF THE RIVER'S PRESENCE OCCUR TO HIM --!

BY THE NINETEEN GODS! THE STREAM FLOWS WESTWARD!

IT MUST EMPTY INTO THE SEA OF NEOG SHENDIS!

AND IT IS THERE THAT THE BATTLE AGAINST THE DRAGON KINGS IS TO BE FOUGHT!

I CAN FOLLOW THE RIVER TO ITS DELTA-- AND PERHAPS REJOIN THE OTHERS IN TIME!

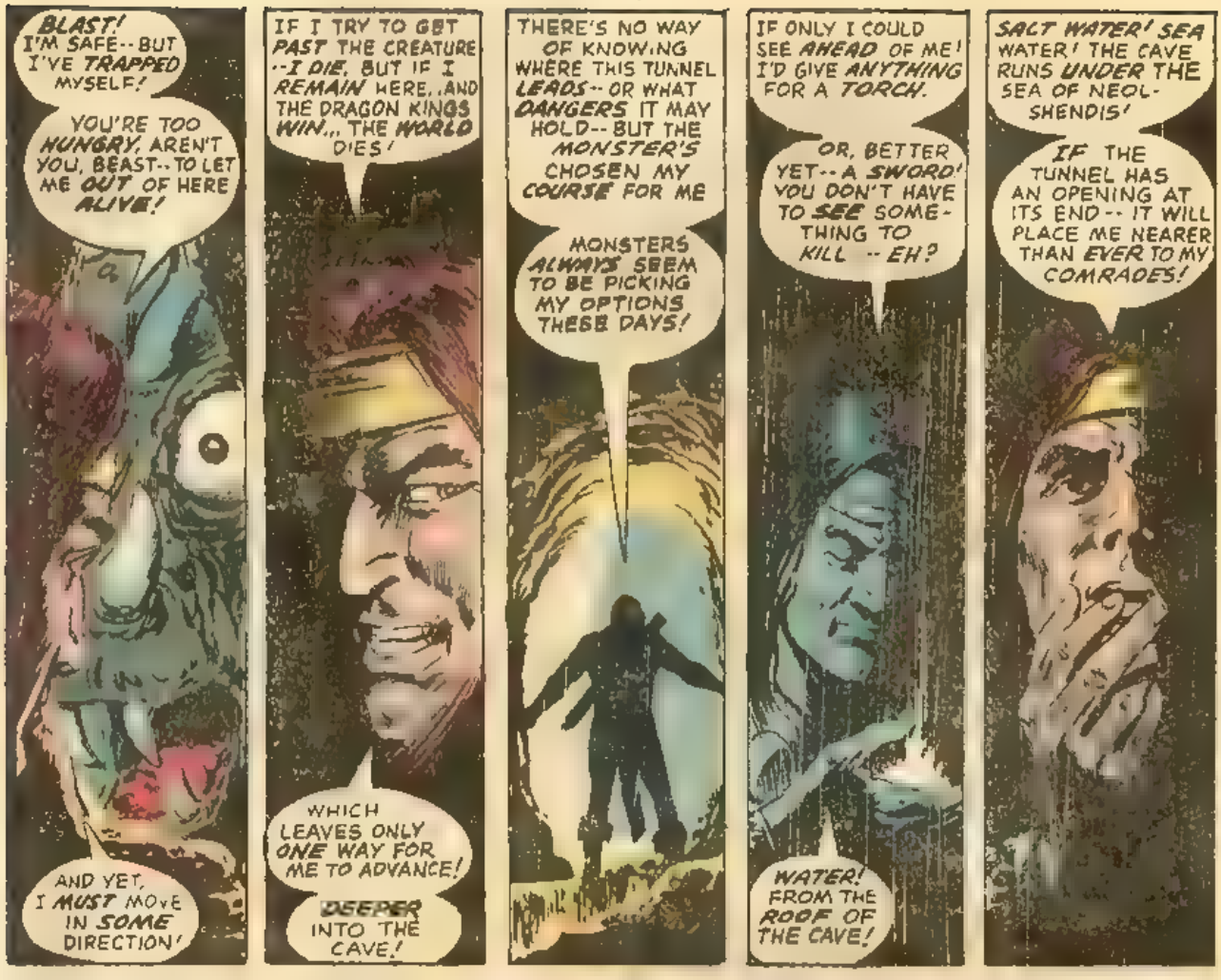
UNLESS-- I AM TOO FAR FROM THAT MYSTIC SEA!

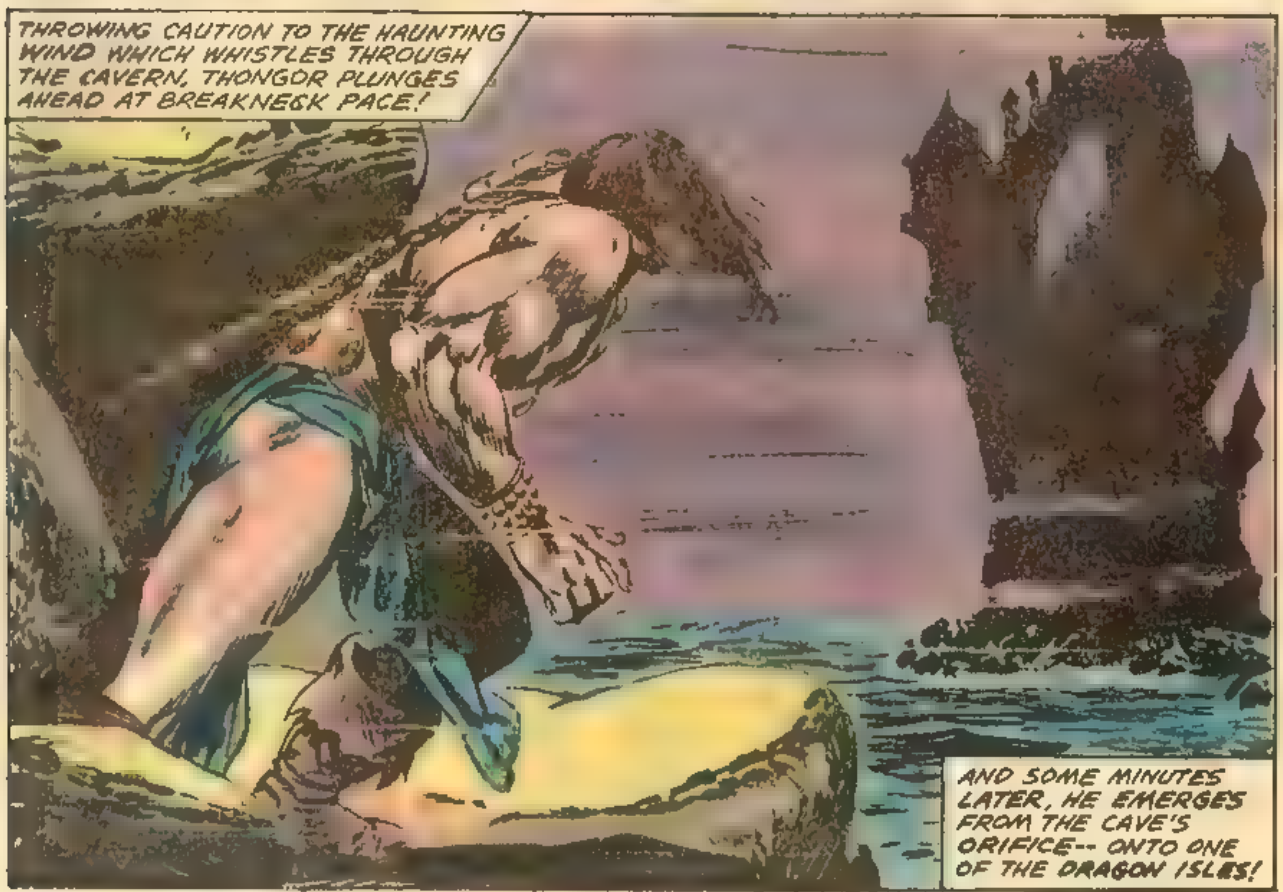
GODS BE PRAISED! I AM NEARER THE DRAGON ISLES THAN I DARED HOPE!

THERE-- IN THE DISTANCE - I CAN SEE [illegible] PEAK AGAINST THE MOON!

I CAN THANK THE MOTHER GRAKK FOR THAT, IF NOTHING ELSE!

IT'S BEST I COVER THE DISTANCE ON FOOT. NO TELLING HOW THE RIVER MIGHT WIND AWAY FROM THE SEA
I COULD MISS SOME QUICKER ROUTE OVERLAND IF I LET THE CURRENT CARRY ME!
BESIDES-- I WOULD BE A FOOL TO THINK I'VE LEFT BEHIND ME--
--ALL THE PERILS THESE MOUNTAINS HAVE TO OFFER!
THAT SOUND-- THE CLUMPING OF MONSTROUS HOOVES!
NO! THIS CAN'T BE! NOT SO SOON! I'VE NO WEAPON-- NOWHERE TO RUN!
I EXPECTED SOMETHING -- BUT NOT THIS-- NOT NOW! WHAT CAN I--?
W-WAIT! THERE'S A HOLE IN THE MOUNTAINSIDE! A CAVE!
IT'S MY ONLY CHANCE!
THE OPENING'S WIDE ENOUGH FOR ME!
PRAY GORM IT'S TOO NARROW FOR HIM!


BLAST! I'M SAFE--BUT I'VE TRAPPED MYSELF!
YOU'RE TOO HUNGRY, AREN'T YOU, BEAST--TO LET ME OUT OF HERE ALIVE!
AND YET, I MUST MOVE IN SOME DIRECTION!
IF I TRY TO GET PAST THE CREATURE --I DIE, BUT IF I REMAIN HERE, AND THE DRAGON KINGS WIN... THE WORLD DIES!
WHICH LEAVES ONLY ONE WAY FOR ME TO ADVANCE!
DEEPER INTO THE CAVE!
THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING WHERE THIS TUNNEL LEADS--OR WHAT DANGERS IT MAY HOLD--BUT THE MONSTER'S CHOSEN MY COURSE FOR ME
MONSTERS ALWAYS SEEM TO BE PICKING MY OPTIONS THESE DAYS!
IF ONLY I COULD SEE AHEAD OF ME! I'D GIVE ANYTHING FOR A TORCH.
OR, BETTER YET--A SWORD! YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEE SOMETHING TO KILL --EH?
WATER! FROM THE ROOF OF THE CAVE!
SALT WATER! SEA WATER! THE CAVE RUNS UNDER THE SEA OF NEOLSHENDIS!
IF THE TUNNEL HAS AN OPENING AT ITS END--IT WILL PLACE ME NEARER THAN EVER TO MY COMRADES!


THROWING CAUTION TO THE HAUNTING WIND WHICH WHISTLES THROUGH THE CAVERN, THONGOR PLUNGES AHEAD AT BREAKNECK PACE!
AND SOME MINUTES LATER, HE EMERGES FROM THE CAVE'S ORIFICE--ONTO ONE OF THE DRAGON ISLES!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

CREATURE FEATURES

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP, 575 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK, NY 10022

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE BULLPEN

This issue of CREATURES ON THE LOOSE brings to a close both our adaptation of Lin Carter's *The Wizard of Lemuria* and the Marvel series of THONGOR adventures, at least for the time being.

We're taking a break to look at the sales figures— and the strip itself, of course— to try to determine what we did right, what we did wrong, what we could have done better, and, ultimately, whether or not the strip should be reinstated at a later date.

Naturally, *you* have a say in this decision, too. If you'd like to see more tales of our young Valkarthan bladesman...WRITE!!

Tell us what you liked (or didn't) about the strip. Tell us whether you'd prefer to see it reappear in a color comics format or perhaps in one of our black-and-white magazines. Tell us which artist/writer team you preferred. Tell us *anything* you think will help us!

Even if you hated every panel of every THONGOR story, write and let us know. But don't forget to mention *why!* If we blew it this time, for whatever reasons, your letters can prevent us from making the same mistakes again.

The moral of the above five paragraphs: you can't always get what you want. UNLESS YOU ASK FOR IT! So write, Write, WRITE, *WRITE!* (And if you don't, it's not because we didn't ask.)

And now, a word about CREATURES #30. Mystery. That's the word. Because, as of this writing, believe it or don't, we're not quite sure what's going to appear in our next issue. We have three very exciting new ideas in the works already, and one of them will grace these pages sixty days hence. That much we can promise you. So join us— and we'll all be surprised together!!

Okay. That's all the ramblin' prose we plan to spew forth for this issue. We'd like to devote the rest of this page to an assortment of general-type questions that keep popping up over and over again in our mail. These are short questions asked by several (at least) readers every month, all of which deserve answers, but because of space limitations, never quite seem to get answered.

So...here goes!

Q. *Why do strips and magazines get discontinued?*

A. Lots of reasons. But frankly, the most frequent one is sales. If a book just doesn't appeal to enough people, it's gotta go. Otherwise, comics publishers also go...broke, that is.

Occasionally, though, an odd thing happens. A borderline case. A magazine will be selling well enough to warrant its continued publication— but just barely. In a case of that type we have to consider the strip aesthetic merits and consider other strip ideas that we have on hand or in head. If we get the feeling that something's wrong with the current strip— however undefinable that "something" may be— we try either to make changes in the art or storyline (*a la* CAPTAIN MARVEL or SUB-MARINER, for example), or we decide to try some entirely new project which we feel has a better chance at success, both artistically and commercially.

In short, then, it really boils down to exercising our collective common and artistic sense. If we feel a strip has undeniable potential in every area, we give it every chance. (CONAN is probably the best example. Its sales at first were only fair, despite the awesome creative talents— those of Roy Thomas and Barry Smith— being lavished on the strip. But we were convinced that, given time, our readers would accept this new-to-comics brand of heroic fantasy. CONAN THE BARBARIAN is now, needless to

say, one of Marvel's top sellers, as well as being perhaps the finest artistic triumph of the Marvel Age so far.)

Q. *Why do you switch artists and writers on strips so often?*

A. Again...lots of reasons. In fact, there are almost as many reasons as there are strips and artists and writers. Sometimes editor Roy Thomas or art director John Romita will decide that an artist or writer just doesn't fit the requirements of a particular strip. Other times, the writer or artist will reach that conclusion himself and ask for a different assignment. Still other changes are made to pull a mag out of a slump, avoid production hassles, or just because it seems the logical thing to do. Occasionally, a writer will sense he's run out of ideas for a strip he's working on and will want to try something completely different, simply because he needs a change— and feels the readers do, too!

And before anybody asks: yes, the writers and artists do have considerable say in these decisions. And anyone who tells you differently is shuckin' ya! (Or else is shooting off his mouth about something he doesn't know anything about.)

Q. *Does anyone actually read the letters we readers send in? Or do you just read a slect few? How do we know you read them?*

A. There are lots of misconceptions floating around about how Marvel handles fan mail— and we're going to take this opportunity to clear the air of confusion on this subject here and now.

First of all, YES! *Every* letter that reaches our office gets read! Every letter. Whether typed, handwritten, or scrawled in crayon!

It's true, of course, that Stan and Roy, whose regular duties keep them occupied approximately twenty-three-and-one-half hours per day (the extra half-hour, we understand, they use for sleeping and bathing and an occasional meal), can't read every one of the thousands of letters we receive each month *personally*. But a member of our staff compiles a thorough, detailed summary of each week's mail for them, and this they read with utmost care and attention.

In addition, the individual artists and writers usually do read *all* the letters on their own particular books, so they can gauge what their readers are thinking of their efforts. (And believe us, gang— that can be a painful experience at times. Just as it can be a joyous, ego-boosting cause for celebration. But no matter which it turns out to be, we *learn* from your comments and criticisms. And even after ten years of monumental successes in this field, we still figure we've got a lot of learning to do.) So, if you write, your voice will be heard— and listened to!

How do you *know* this is true? The best evidence, we think, is pages like this one. Our letters pages. And the special notes we occasionally present (such as the one you're reading) to keep you informed on what the blazes we're doing around here! After all, we can't print something we haven't read! And in order to choose letters for these pages, we have to sift through every letter written on the magazine in question.

So, to any of you who have been reticent about writing, for fear you'd be wasting your time, for fear we'd just file your comments with the used Kleenex— forget it! We take you people seriously! As we've said many times in the past, you're the lifeblood of Marvel. Without you, we couldn't exist. And we want to hear what you're thinking — about CREATURES ON THE LOOSE, FANTASTIC FOUR, CONAN, SPIDER-MAN, TOMB OF DRACULA, WAR OF THE WORLDS, KULL, THOR, about all our mags! And we mean that!

So WRITE, already!

• • •

Okay. So much for question and answer time. Now, it's plug time. For those of you who have enjoyed the stories of Thongor in this magazine, those who will mourn their passing into limbo, those who have not yet discovered our other sword-and-sorcery mags— we want to mention that we've got two other excellent titles in the same vein. CONAN THE BARBARIAN and KULL THE DESTROYER. You won't want to miss an issue of either one once you've sampled them.

Likewise, those of you who have enjoyed Vicente Alcazar and Val Mayerik's excellent artwork on THONGOR should keep your eyes peeled for their future appearances in both our color comics and in our black-and-white mystery/horror mags. You'll be seeing much, much more of both of these two talented gentlemen as the months go by.

Finally, Steve Gerber, who wrote this issue and last of THONGOR, got down on his hands and knees and begged us in no uncertain terms to mention that he's currently authoring a whole slew of Marvel mags, including: DARE DEVIL, MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE (featuring the team-up adventures of the ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing!), MARVEL SPOTLIGHT (with the mind-bending supernatural escapades of the Son of Satan), FEAR (featuring the world's only science fiction vampire, the man called Morbius!), TALES OF THE ZOMBIE, and, of course, Steve's pride and joy, the macabre MAN-THING mag.

And that just about does it for this go-round. Hope you enjoyed the (for once) straight answers to some of the straight questions you've been asking us. (It's not often we can hold our sense of the ridiculous in check for an entire page, y'know.)

And we hope, too, that you'll join us next issue for whatever it is that's going to be here. If nothing else, we can promise twenty cents' worth of surprises. And with Marvel, that always means *something* interesting.

Excelsior, gang!

THIS IS IT! YOUR

MARVEL VALUE STAMP

FOR THIS ISSUE!

CLIP 'EM AND COLLECT 'EM!

A FEW SURPRISES—A SMATTERING OF SURMISES —AND A HINT ABOUT PRIZES!

ROY'S ROSTRUM

Sorry, people, but no STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX this time, 'cause Our Fearless Leader is out of town. Matter of fact, he's leapfroggin' all over *Europe*, but, more of that from The Man himself, soon as he recovers from jet lag!

Meanwhile, I thought this would be a good chance to answer one of the myriad questions which is asked in numerous letters every day: namely just who is the editorial staff of Marvel Comics, anyway?

Well, besides STAN and myself (who manage to keep busy, what with one thing and another), there's Marvelous MARV WOLFMAN, who — in addition to being Editor of our newest smash hit, CRAZY Magazine — basks in the title of Associate Editor. Right about now, Marv is spending virtually his full workday, and then some, on CRAZY and on our popular line of giant-sized mags, including our spanking-new biggie, THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU — of which more on our Bullpen Bonus Page!

As to our ever-enchanting color comics, they're mostly proofread and pondered over by Dutiful DON McGREGOR and our newest nabob, Devil-May-Care DOUG MOENCH, who just blew in from the Windy City! These two lads are classified officially as Assistant Editors — but they and Marv shoulder enough responsibilities to give Atlas a backache!

Oh yes — and we don't wanna forget Cute CARLA JOSEPH, who doubles as my secretary and as proofreader of our letters pages and reprints, in addition to a thousand-and-one other tasks that need doing!

And wouldja believe — with all those editorial types running around, the work keeps piling up!

Fact is, that's why our hard-working writers receive billing as Contributing Editors, as well: Merry GERRY CONWAY, who scripts several of our top mags each month; STEVE (Baby) GERBER, who labors over our letters pages, in addition to his other chores; Live-It-Up LEN WEIN, TONY (The Tiger) ISABELLA, and even such faraway stalwarts as Stainless STEVE ENGLEHART and Mischievous MIKE FRIEDRICH.

Pardon me for getting all dewy-eyed, but I truly don't believe that any editor in comics history was ever lucky enough to have assembled such a team of talented typewriter titans!

Now, if I could only persuade a guy named LEE to pound that battered old Remington of his, now and then — I'd have it made!

Salud!

Roy

ITEM! Here's an off-the-wall flash You've doubtless heard of the blockbustin' new movie, THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD, now making the rounds at your local cinema Well, only a few short weeks from now, by special arrangement with Columbia Pictures, mirthful Marvel will present its own full-color version of that instant film classic! See the movie — read the comic-mag — and if there aren't any bubblegum cards to collect, don't blame *us*!

ITEM! Just a brief aside to thank those of you who rushed us the first Brobdingnagian batch of mail we've received on our mighty MARVEL VALUE STAMPS! It seems that, without really knowing it, half of Marveldom Assembled has been just waiting for something like this! And, by next month, we promise to clue you in on the first (but not the last) of several Bonus Benefits you can obtain once you've amassed a full collection of the first hundred stamps! Till then — keep those scissors well-oiled, effendi!

MARVEL MINI-ITEMS! Congrats to GERRY CONWAY (also known in the trade as GERARD F. CONWAY) on his newest s-f opus, *Mindship*, due out as a paperback from DAW Books right about now! At age 21 and with two published books (plus a whole passel of, short stories) to his credit, Ger's the envy of the whole blamed Bullpen! • Speaking of Mr. C., he's teamed up with a fair-to-middlin' artist named JOHN ROMITA on the latest SPIDER-MAN — and the result is just short of fantastic! The Jazzy One's been dying to draw an issue for months now, but his back-bending chores as Marvel's Art Director have kept him busy on covers and such! Anyway, you've been clamoring for more of J.R.'s work all along — so let the guy know you care! • We kinda think you'll dig the new penciller on MAN-THING: a fella name of MIKE PLOOG, who's drawn every Marvel monster from WEREWOLF to FRANKENSTEIN and back again! Keep it up, Michael, and maybe one of these days we'll see if you still remember how to draw a *human being*! • Hey, wanna know what one member of the Bullpen thinks happened to those missing Watergate tapes? Well then, sneak a peek at the latest "War of the Worlds" epic in AMAZING ADVENTURES, as Don McGregor and Happy HERB TRIMPE finally let the cat out of the bag! • We were gonna mention something here about Vulcanizin' VICENTE ALCAZAR, whose recent artwork in DRACULA LIVES, THONGOR, and elsewhere is already earning him a whole horde of fans — about how he came here to Fun City from his native Spain — about how Nefarious NEAL ADAMS sent him around to us — and how we don't intend to let him get away. But, now we look around and he's flown the coop *back* to Madrid for a few months to get things in order (all the while turning out collector's items by the barrelful). So we think we'll save our plug for when he moves fulltime to the U.S. of A., okay?

ITEM THE LAST! Closing note: Here's a message in our brand new Code, as featured in the 4th fabulous issue of FOOM Magazine, and thus decipherable only by accredited FOOM Members and selected FBI brass. It concerns still another 75¢ mag that'll be coming your way by the time spring rolls around, and we'll sock it to you in two short words

LIDG ALZO!

There! Now who said we can't keep it short and sweet — especially when we're running out of room!

MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST
Color-Mags Now On Sale!

FANTASTIC FOUR #146 ("Doomsday — at 200 Degrees Below!") — **SPIDER-MAN #132** (The Molten Man Returns!) — **THOR #223** — HULK (The Inhumans strike!) — **AVENGERS #123** — **TOMB OF DRACULA #20** (Man-hunt for a Vampire!) — **CAPTAIN AMERICA & THE FALCON #173** — **WEREWOLF BY NIGHT #17** (Two's a crowd — when they're both werewolves!) — **SUB-MARINER #70** — **MARVEL TEAM-UP #21** (Spider-Man, Dr. Strange, and the comeback of Xandu, the Unspeakable!) — **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #38** (The Warrior and the Were-Woman!) — **DAREDEVIL #109** — **MAN-THING #5** ("Night of the Laughing Dead!" — **DEFENDERS #13** — **MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #3** (The ever-lovin' Thing — plus Daredevil!) — **KA-ZAR #3** (Man-Ape into Man-God!) — **AMAZING ADVENTURES #24** — **MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #15** (The Son of Satan vs. the Demon called Baphomet!) — **FRANKENSTEIN #10** — **CREATURES ON THE LOOSE #29** (Thongor, Warrior of the Lost Land!) — **JUNGLE ACTION #10** (The Black Panther vs. King Karnaj! Plus — the very first sketch ever drawn of T'Challa!) — **SGT. FURY #119** — **MARVEL PREMIERE #15** (The Origin of Iron Fist!) — **CAPTAIN MARVEL #32** —

—And that doesn't count our 75¢ stunners! All this — just 'cause somebody out there liked **FANTASTIC FOUR #1**!

THIS IS THE MONTH OF
MARVEL GIANT-SIZE SUPER-STARS!
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MANY TIMES DURING THE COURSE OF THEIR JOURNEY, SHARAJSHA HAS DESCRIBED THIS LOATHESOME PLACE TO THE YOUNG VALKARTHAN--

THUS, THONGOR KNOWS AT ONCE WHERE HE IS--

--AND WHAT HE MUST DO.

THE FOG IS DENSER THAN HE HAD IMAGINED IT--THE SEA, DARKER AND MORE FORBIDDING--

--AND HE WILL LEARN, MOMENTARILY, THAT THESE WATERS ARE COLDER THAN ANY HE HAS SWUM BEFORE.

BUT SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE WALLS OF THAT BLEAK FORTRESS, HIS COMRADES ARE FIGHTING FOR MAN'S RIGHT TO EXIST--

AND HE LONGS TO BE BESIDE THEM--AND ESPECIALLY BESIDE SUMIA--IN THAT FATEFUL STRUGGLE.

ARMED ONLY WITH THE LOVE HE FEELS FOR HIS COMPATRIOTS--AND HIS RAGE AT THE DRAGON KINGS' AWESOME AMBITIONS--HE PREPARES TO MOUNT A ONE-MAN ASSAULT UPON THE CASTLE...

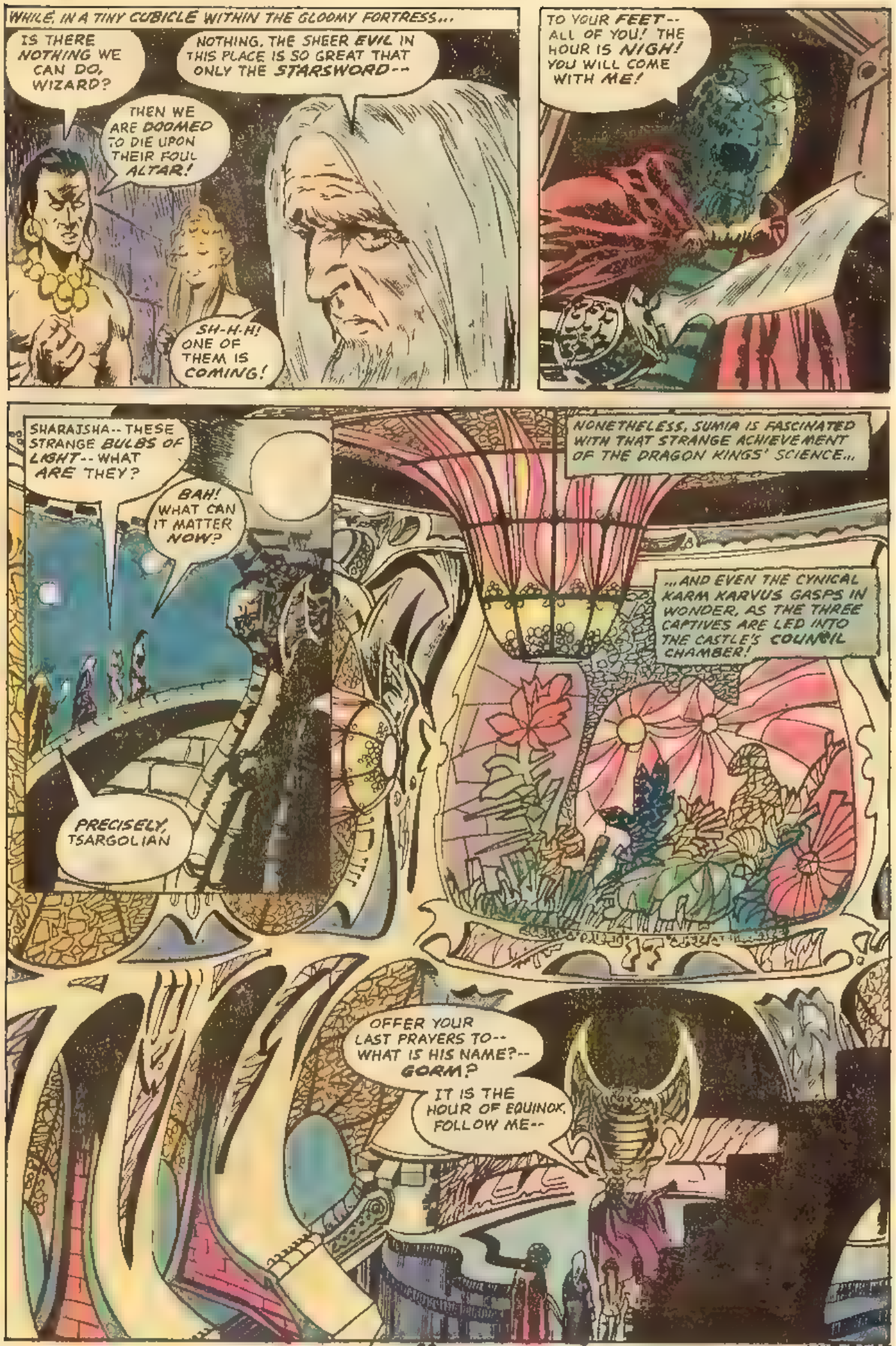
...WHEN HE IS SUDDENLY DISTRACTED BY AN ICE-BLUE GLOW FROM THE OTHERWISE JET-BLACK WATERS.

HE INVESTIGATES--AND DISCOVERS THAT WHICH HE LEAST DESIRED TO FIND: THE STARSWORD!

SHARAJSHA WOULD NEVER SURRENDER THE MYSTIC BLADE--EXCEPT BY FORCE!

SO MY FRIENDS ARE EITHER CAPTIVES OR CORPSES.

IF THE FIRST--THEY SHALL BE RELEASED. IF THE SECOND--THEY SHALL BE AVENGED! I SWEAR IT ON THE NAME OF FATHER GORM!


WHILE, IN A TINY CUBICLE WITHIN THE GLOOMY FORTRESS...
IS THERE NOTHING WE CAN DO, WIZARD?
NOTHING. THE SHEER EVIL IN THIS PLACE IS SO GREAT THAT ONLY THE STARSWORD--
THEN WE ARE DOOMED TO DIE UPON THEIR FOUL ALTAR!
SH-H-H! ONE OF THEM IS COMING!
TO YOUR FEET-- ALL OF YOU! THE HOUR IS NIGH! YOU WILL COME WITH ME!
SHARAJSHA-- THESE STRANGE BULBS OF LIGHT-- WHAT ARE THEY?
BAH! WHAT CAN IT MATTER NOW?
PRECISELY, TSARGOLIAN
NONETHELESS, SUMIA IS FASCINATED WITH THAT STRANGE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DRAGON KINGS' SCIENCE...
...AND EVEN THE CYNICAL KARM KARVUS GASPS IN WONDER, AS THE THREE CAPTIVES ARE LED INTO THE CASTLE'S COUNCIL CHAMBER!
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IT IS THE HOUR OF EQUINOX. FOLLOW ME--

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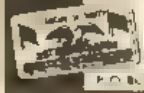

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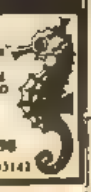

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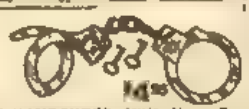

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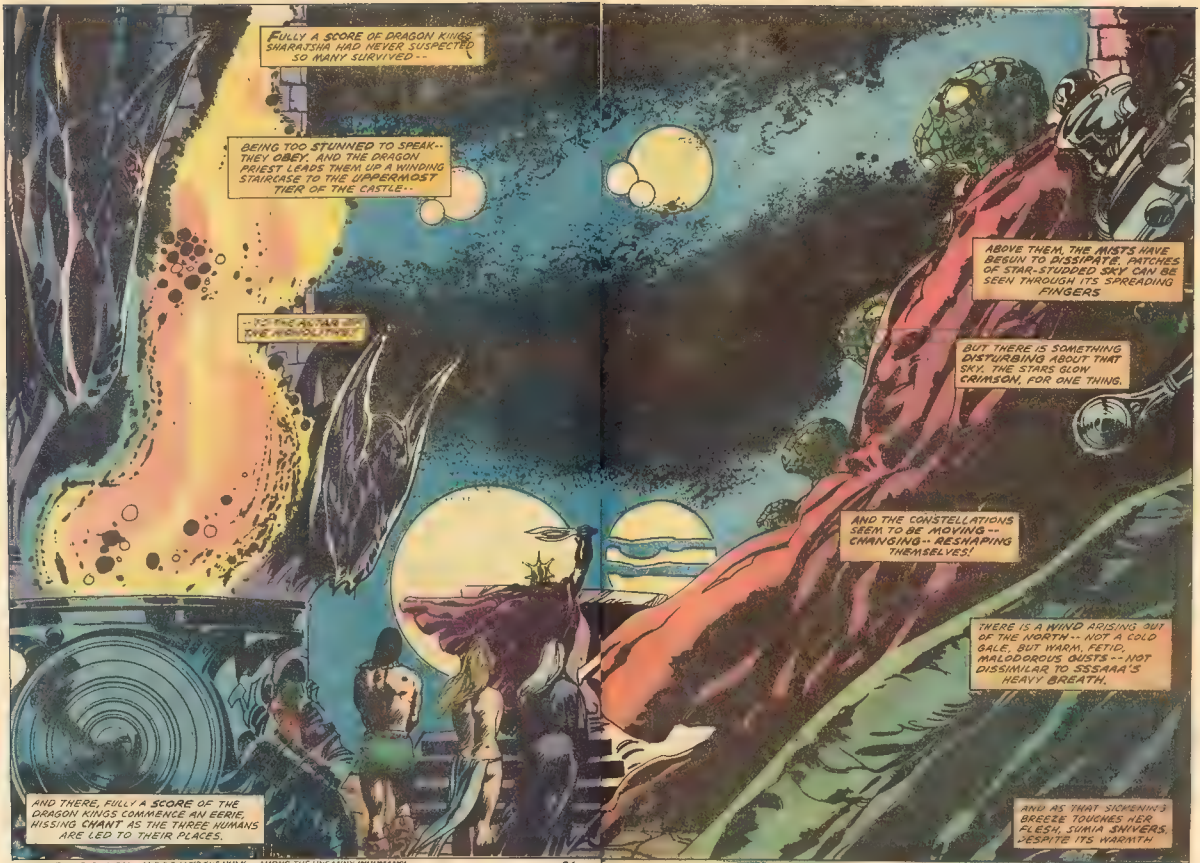
FULLY A SCORE OF DRAGON KINGS SHARATSHA HAD NEVER SUSPECTED SO MANY SURVIVED--
BEING TOO STUNNED TO SPEAK-- THEY OBEY. AND THE DRAGON PRIEST LEADS THEM UP A WINDING STAIRCASE TO THE UPPERMOST TIER OF THE CASTLE--
--TO THE ALTAR OF THE RESOLUTE!
AND THERE, FULLY A SCORE OF THE DRAGON KINGS COMMENCE AN EERIE, HISSING CHANT AS THE THREE HUMANS ARE LED TO THEIR PLACES.
ABOVE THEM, THE MISTS HAVE BEGUN TO DISSIPATE. PATCHES OF STAR-STUDDED SKY CAN BE SEEN THROUGH ITS SPREADING FINGERS
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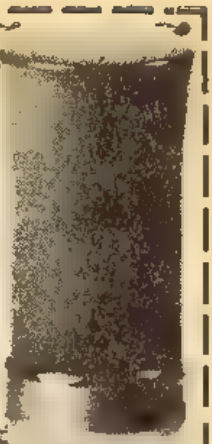

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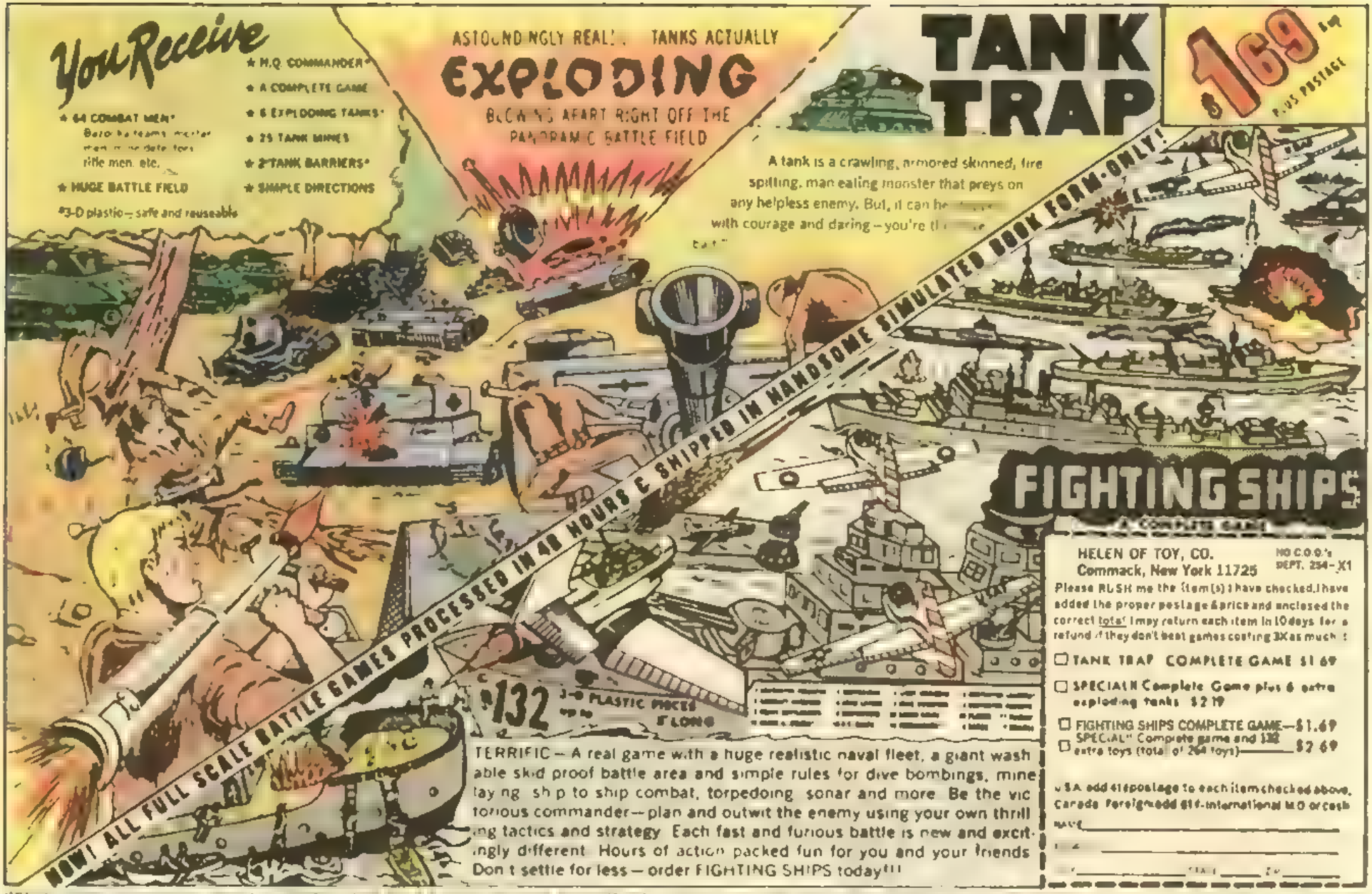
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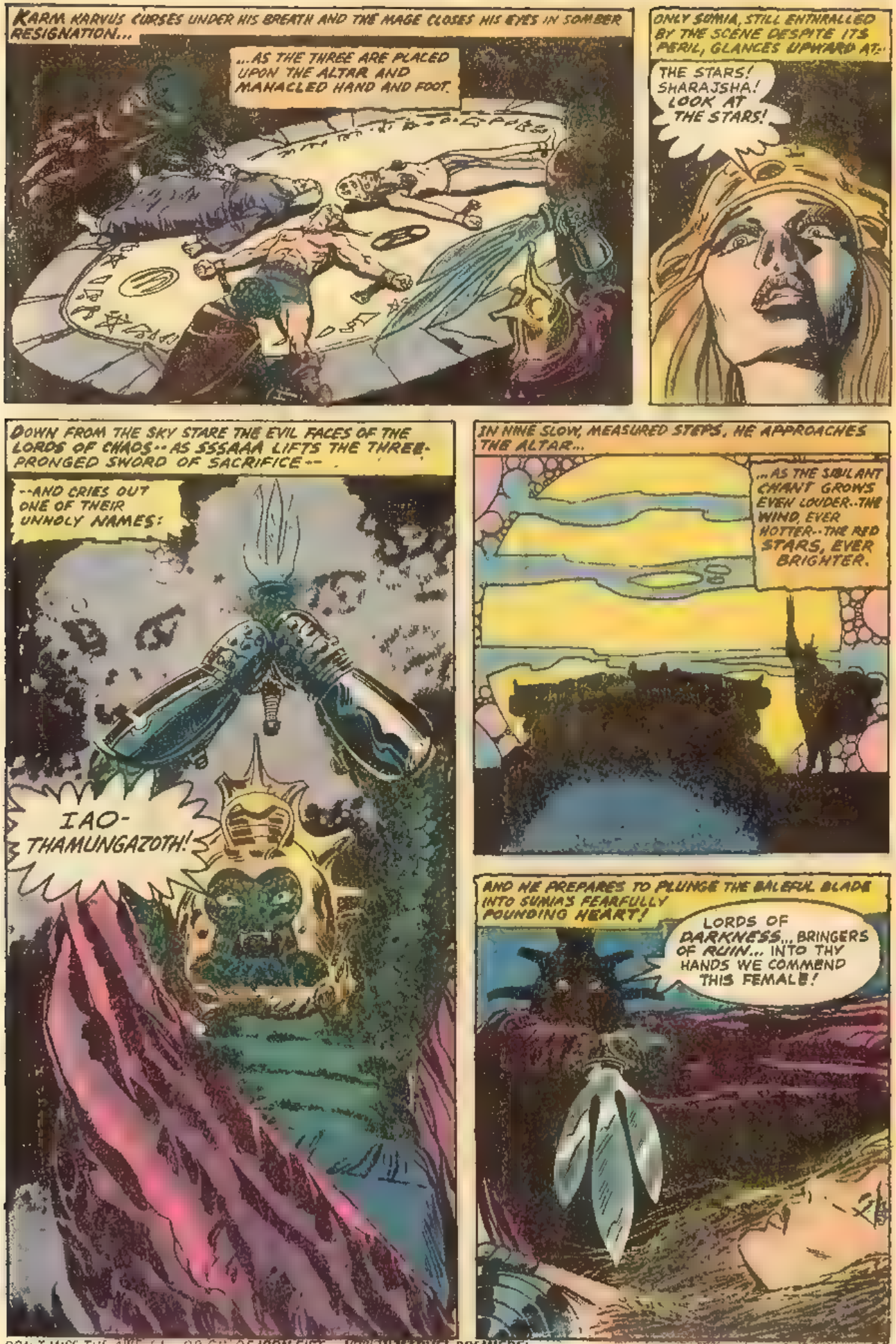
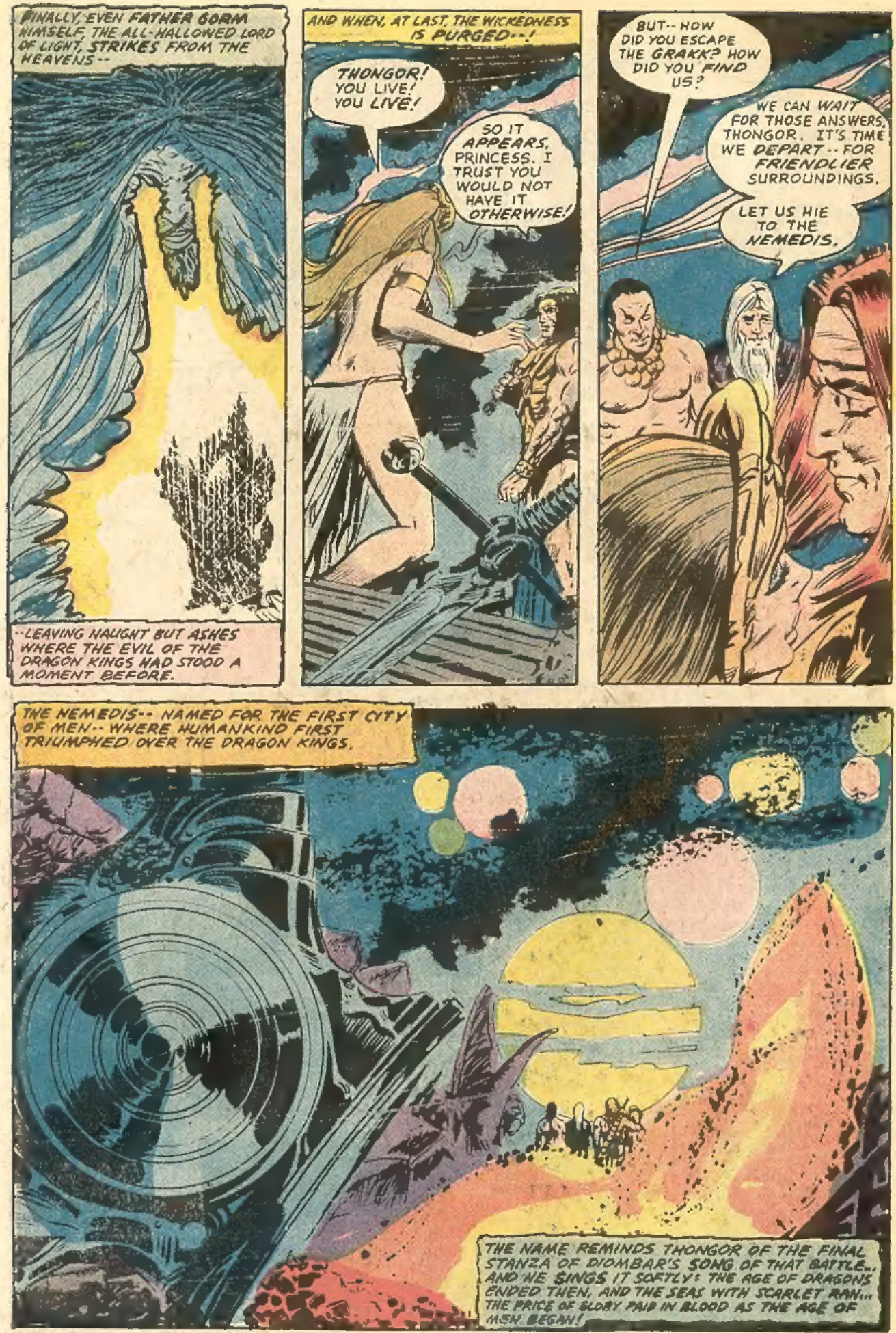

KARM KARVUS CURSES UNDER HIS BREATH AND THE MAGE CLOSES HIS EYES IN SOMBER RESIGNATION...
...AS THE THREE ARE PLACED UPON THE ALTAR AND MANACLED HAND AND FOOT.
ONLY SUNIA, STILL ENTHRALLED BY THE SCENE DESPITE ITS PERIL, GLANCES UPWARD AT:
THE STARS! SHARAJSHA! LOOK AT THE STARS!
DOWN FROM THE SKY STARE THE EVIL FACES OF THE LORDS OF CHAOS--AS SSSAAA LIFTS THE THREE-PRONGED SWORD OF SACRIFICE--
--AND CRIES OUT ONE OF THEIR UNHOLY NAMES:
IAO-THAMUNGAZOTH!
IN NINE SLOW, MEASURED STEPS, HE APPROACHES THE ALTAR...
...AS THE SIBILANT CHANT GROWS EVEN LOUDER--THE WIND, EVER HOTTER--THE RED STARS, EVER BRIGHTER.
AND HE PREPARES TO PLUNGE THE BALEFUL BLADE INTO SUNIA'S FEARFULLY POUNDING HEART!
LORDS OF DARKNESS... BRINGERS OF RUIN... INTO THY HANDS WE COMMEND THIS FEMALE!

BUT BEFORE THE BLADE CAN STRIKE ITS BLOODY MARK--
--A BOLT OF BLUE FIRE CLEAVES IT IN TWAIN!
AND SUDDENLY, THE AIR IS FILLED WITH THE ROARING LAUGHTER OF THONGOR!
NO, SHARAJSHA THE STARSWORD IS HERE! AND THE SACRIFICE IS ENDED!
AS IS YOUR LIFE, PRIEST OF DRAGONS! DIE!
THE CHAINS, THONGOR --SEVER THE CHAINS, SO I MAY EMPLOY MY SPELLS!
IT IS DONE, WIZARD!
FROM THAT POINT ON, IT IS THE SWORD WHICH GUIDES THONGOR'S HAND, AS ITS ICY FLAME TEARS ASUNDER THE MONOLITHS AND THEIR MASTERS!


FINALLY, EVEN FATHER GORM HIMSELF, THE ALL-HALLOWED LORD OF LIGHT, STRIKES FROM THE HEAVENS--
--LEAVING NAUGHT BUT ASHES WHERE THE EVIL OF THE DRAGON KINGS HAD STOOD A MOMENT BEFORE.
AND WHEN, AT LAST, THE WICKEDNESS IS PURGED--!
THONGOR! YOU LIVE! YOU LIVE!
SO IT APPEARS, PRINCESS. I TRUST YOU WOULD NOT HAVE IT OTHERWISE!
BUT-- HOW DID YOU ESCAPE THE GRAKK? HOW DID YOU FIND US?
WE CAN WAIT FOR THOSE ANSWERS, THONGOR. IT'S TIME WE DEPART -- FOR FRIENDLIER SURROUNDINGS.
LET US HIE TO THE NEMEDIS.
THE NEMEDIS-- NAMED FOR THE FIRST CITY OF MEN-- WHERE HUMANKIND FIRST TRIUMPHED OVER THE DRAGON KINGS.
THE NAME REMINDS THONGOR OF THE FINAL STANZA OF DIOMBAR'S SONG OF THAT BATTLE... AND HE SINGS IT SOFTLY: THE AGE OF DRAGONS ENDED THEN, AND THE SEAS WITH SCARLET RAN... THE PRICE OF GLORY PAID IN BLOOD AS THE AGE OF MEN BEGAN!

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